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ON AN OGAM INSCRIPTION SUPPOSED TO BEAR AN ANGLO-SAXON NAME.

BY THE RIGHT REV. CHARLES GRAVES, D.D., Lord Bishop of Limerick.

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II.

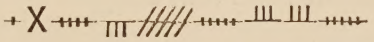
ON AN OGAM INSCRIPTION SUPPOSED TO BEAR AN ANGLO-SAXON NAME.

By THE RIGHT REV. CHARLES GRAVES, D.D., Lord Bishop of Limerick.

[Read April 25, 1892.]

The object aimed at in this communication is to transliterate and explain an Ogam inscription which, so far as I know, has not been examined with the care which its peculiar character demands.

It is one of a group of nine found at Ballintaggart, near Dingle. Every stroke in it is distinct, and no doubt can be raised as to the characters. On this point Mr. Brash and Sir Samuel Ferguson are agreed. It stands thus :—



Mr. Brash,* reading it as I do, observes that "it is difficult to determine the word, or words, formed by the letters." He was, in fact, perplexed by finding in it the x† symbol, which he did not regard as capable of being read as a consonant, placed between two vowels, and thus giving a transliteration which appeared unintelligible. He adds, however, that "we have here the name RITTI," but leaves the preceding characters, AXEF, without any attempt to explain them.

Sir S. Ferguson‡ comments upon this inscription as follows :—"Giving its P force to the second character (the x), it reads APEFRITTI, which seems to designate a son of *Efritt*. *Efratt* is a name known in Patrician docu-

* "Ogam Inscribed Monuments," p. 201.

† The reader will, of course, understand that in thus using the English letter x I refer merely to the form of the Ogam symbol, and not to its transliteration.

‡ "Ogam Inscriptions," p. 33.

ments. The *ap*, therefore, may be an early form of the Welsh *map*, the equivalent of the Irish *maqi*."

I cannot assent to the proposition that the first and second characters in this inscription stand for *ap* with the meaning of the Irish *maqi*. Of an *ap* in that sense in an Irish Ogam I know no instance, whilst on the other hand we have the *maqi* equivalent to *filii* in several Welsh Ogams. As for the proper name Efritt or Efratt, I have looked in vain for it in Patrician documents. It is possible, however, that Sir Samuel Ferguson may have remembered that the fictitious pedigree of S. Patrick contains the somewhat similar name of Encretti, from whom the Apostle of Ireland is asserted to have been the twelfth in descent.

Sir S. Ferguson, digressing into an inquiry concerning the relation between the Welsh *p* and the Irish *c*, proceeds no further in his explanation of the inscription.

Having now noticed what has been said with reference to this inscription by the Ogamists who have preceded me, I go on to offer my own interpretation of it. Assuming that it presents us with a proper name in the genitive case, I endeavour to ascertain the name itself. But in seeking for it I take a course different from that adopted by Mr. Brash or Sir Samuel Ferguson. I regard it as given by the inscription taken as a whole. I do not divide it into AXEF and RITTI, as Mr. Brash has done; neither do I follow Sir Samuel Ferguson in dividing it into AX and EFRITTI. As I have intimated, I regard all the characters as uniting to forming the name sought. Proceeding, then, as is usual with decipherers, who begin by directing their efforts towards the point where it seems easiest to make an impression, I commence by an attempt to explain the termination. It was, no doubt, FRITT. Now, in the first place, I observe that this is not the termination of any Ogam name which I remember to have seen. Even the sequence of letters FRIT is, so far as I know, without example in any Ogam inscription. But FRID is the termination of many Anglo-Saxon proper names, such as Alcfrid, Aldfrid, Egfrid, Wilfrid.

I am now taking no rash step in concluding that we have before us an Anglo-Saxon name. We have no reason to be surprised at meeting with one, when we remember how many there were who came hither from

England in the seventh century for the purpose of study or devotion. Bede, after mentioning the great plague of A.D. 664, goes on to say:—

"Hæc autem plaga Hyberniam quoque insulam pari clade premebat. Erant ibidem eo tempore multi nobilium, simul et mediocrum de gente Anglorum, qui tempore Finani et Colmani Episcoporum, relicta insula patria, vel divinæ lectionis, vel continentioris vitæ gratia illo secesserant. Et quidam quidem mox se monasticæ conversationi fideliter manciparunt, alii magis circumeundo per cellas magistrorum, lectioni operam dare gaudebant: quos omnes Scoti libentissime suscipientes, victum eis quotidianum sine pretio, libros quoque ad legendum, et magisterium gratuitum præbere curabant."*

Next, let us consider the AXE. In my Paper on the AXILOGDO inscription† I showed reason for treating AXI as equivalent to AIDH, the vowels A and I being separated by the X character, to which I then assigned the sound of DH. The P‡ would pass readily, as it did pass in other instances, into PH (F or V), from which the transition to the soft guttural DH was easy and natural. Thus the name AIDHLOGOD emerged, a name appearing (in somewhat different spellings, Aedhloga, Aodha logha, Aedaloga, Aithcleacha), as that of a Lord of North Kerry.§ I am aware that some of my critics have continued to assert that I misread this inscription, that the name was really Abilogus, and that it had been preserved in the Annals of Inisfallen. I thought I had done enough to disprove this statement by showing that in the Oxford copy of the Annals the name was Albilogus, a latinized form of FINLOGUS (father of S. Brendan). But if the Ogam graver had intended to write Abilogus, there was no reason why he should not have used the ordinary character for B instead of the X symbol. But I suspected, and still hold that the X symbol in this case was used to denote some peculiar sound differing from any in the Beithluisnin. Now, if AXI gives AIDH, why should not AXE give AEDH?

* Bede, H. E., Bk. III., cap. 27. † Transactions R. I. A., vol. XXVII., p. 31.

‡ The X symbol certainly stands for P in other inscriptions, as, for instance, the Crickhowel Ogam, two of the Ballintaggart group, and the Ballyboodan stone.

§ Aedlugus also appears as the name of an abbot of Clonmacnois, ob. 651, A.D. Mart. Don. Feb. 26. Ann. Four Masters, A.D. 651. Colg. AA. SS., p. 417.

Combining the parts which we have dealt with separately, let us see what we obtain finally as the entire Ogam name. It is AEDHFRITTI, standing for the Saxon EADFRID, or EADFRITH. Let us proceed to inquire how that name could have appeared on an Ogam monument found in Ireland. It was not a name in common use. There was an Eadfrid (or Eadfrith), son of Edwin, king of Northumbria. Having become a Christian, he was baptized by Paulinus.* After the death of his father at Haethfelth, he was treacherously put to death by Penda, king of Mercia, with whom he had taken refuge. It does not appear that he ever visited Ireland.

But there was another Eadfrid, who spent six years in Ireland, as we gather from a very curious letter† addressed to him by his friend Aldhelm.‡ After studying in England, he went over to Ireland when a young man, like so many of his countrymen, who at that time flocked thither in fleet-loads,§ attracted by the reputation for learning enjoyed by the Irish Schools. No one who has walked as much about Corkaguiny as I have done could fail to notice the remains of ancient cells still to be found in hundreds in that barony. One of the most remarkable assemblages of these is to be seen near Ventry, about five miles from Ballintaggart, where the Apefritti Ogam lies. In that country we may imagine Eadfrid going round the cells of the masters from whom he received instruction.‖ I am not aware that an established monastic school, like those of Lismore, Cork, Ross, and Inisfallen, ever existed in that part of Kerry. When Eadfrid returned to his native country, he was welcomed by Aldhelm with the 'præconium' due to a person entitled to be called a Preceptor.¶

The later history of Eadfrid has been so well told by Raine in the Dictionary of Christian Biography that I think it best to give some extracts from it:—

"Eadfrid's chief mission in life was to spread the fame and glory of his

* Bede, H. E., Bk. II., cap. 14. Dict. Christian Biography.

† Ussher, Epp. Hib. Sylloge. Works, Elrington's Ed., vol. IV., pp. 448–451.

‡ Aldhelm and Eadfrid may have been nearly of the same age. Aldhelm was Bishop of Sherbourne, A.D. 705–709; and Eadfrid was Bishop of Lindisfarne, A.D. 698–721.

§ "Catervatim lectores classibus advecti confluunt."—(Aldh.).

‖ See passage already quoted from Bede, H. E., iii. 27. ¶ See Appendix A.

great predecessor, Cuthbert. 'Multum fervens amore,' says Symeon. He rebuilt the oratory on Farne Island, where Cuthbert had lived in solitude, Feldgild then being its occupant.*

"But he did more than this. He was an artist of no common skill, and illuminated the famous Evangeliarium, known as the Durham book, or Lindisfarne Gospels, which is one of the most beautiful MSS. in Europe. Eadfrid probably commenced it during Cuthbert's lifetime, whilst he was a monk at Lindisfarne, and it was afterwards laid by the scribe as an offering upon the shrine of the saint. Ethelwold, Eadfrid's successor in the see, gave the cover, which Bilfrid decorated with silver and gold, set with precious stones, and Aldred added an interlinear gloss. This volume was henceforward one of the most precious treasures of Lindisfarne. When the monks were obliged to flee before the Danes they took it with them. On one occasion, in the ninth century, it had a wonderful escape. The monks were trying, in vain, to cross over the channel to Ireland, when the Gospels fell into the sea.† After three days they discovered the book, to their great delight, on the coast of Whithern, uninjured, save by a few stains of sea-water, which it still shows. When the monks rested, at length, at Durham, and Lindisfarne was restored, the volume went back to its old home, and there it stayed till the Dissolution. It was called, in the Inventories of the House, 'Liber S. Cuthberti qui demersus est in mare.' After a while it passed into the hands of Robert Bowyer, clerk of the House of Commons, from whom it was acquired by Sir Robert Cotton. It is now among the Cottonian MSS. in the British Museum, Nero D. 4. The beauty of the writing and the exquisite illuminations are noticed by every writer on palæography, especially by Professor Westwood.

"The writing of these Gospels was not Eadfrid's only offering to Cuthbert's memory. He took care that his good deeds were handed down to posterity. The nameless author of the first biography of Cuthbert dedicates his works to Eadfrid and the family at Lindisfarne, stating that he had written it at their desire.‡ They had also the honour of evoking a greater boon to history, in return for which Eadfrid promised that the

* Symeon, *Hist. Eccl. Dunelm.* i. 11. † Symeon, *H. E. D.* ii. 12.

‡ Appendix, Bedæ *opp. minora*, pp. 259–60

writer should be duly remembered in the prayers of the house of Lindisfarne.*

"It can be no matter of surprise that the wandering Cuthbertines carried about with them the bones of Eadfrid, to whom their beloved saint had been so dear. The relics rested at last in Durham, in the shrine, where they were deposited in a little bag, and even now they have not wholly disappeared."†

To the history of Eadfrid, in the latter part of his life, I can only add that, along with two other Northumbrian Bishops, Bosa, Bishop of York, and John, Bishop of Hexham, he was present at the important Council of the Nidd, where the long-disputed case of Wilfrid was brought to a conclusion.

The reader of this Paper will not find in it a *proof* that the inscription treated of exhibits the name of Eadfrid, who was Bishop of Lindisfarne, and wrote the Book of Durham. But I venture to assert that such a conclusion is highly probable; for the name represented by the Ogam ended with -FRIT or -FRID, an Anglo-Saxon termination. It therefore commemorated a person of that race; and the name begins with three characters which I have elsewhere shown to stand for AIDH or AEDH. Putting these syllables together, we obtain AEDHFRIT. Now, AI or AE in ancient Irish spelling would be equivalent to the Anglo-Saxon EA. We therefore finally come to the name EADFRIT, which was also spelt EAHFRIT. We have no record of any Anglo-Saxon called by that name, or by any name closely resembling it, who resided in Ireland, except EADFRIT, Bishop of Lindisfarne.

It is true there is need of some explanation to show how the Ogam characters which appear in this inscription represented the Anglo-Saxon name. Why did not the Ogam graver write EADFRIT in the Ogam characters which stand singly, and in that order for the letters in the name as it was spelt in the Anglo-Saxon way? I cannot offer a positive explanation. But I maintain generally that, as the Ogam was a cryptic character, only intended to be legible by experts, we must be prepared to meet with many and often insuperable difficulties in the transliteration and explanation of Ogam inscriptions a thousand years old or more.

* *Vita S. Cuthb.*, Prologus.

† *Carmen de situ Dunelm. Hist. Translat. S. Cuthb.* 191; Symeon, *Hist. Eccl. Dunelm.* ii. 6.

The reader cannot fail to have observed that I do not regard this monument as having been a sepulchral one. It is not to be supposed that Eadfrid died in Ireland. It may rather be assumed as certain that he died at Lindisfarne. Florence of Worcester records the accession, A.D. 721, of Æthelwald, Abbot of Melrose, who succeeded Eadfrid in the see. But I have not found in Symeon of Durham's *Historia Ecclesiæ Dunelmensis*, or in any Anglo-Saxon Martyrology the day or place of Eadfrid's death. The stone on which I suppose his name to have been inscribed may have been used by him as a pillow. This was an ascetic practice used by monks, for instance, by S. Columba,* S. Kieran of Saiger,† and S. Kieran of Clonmacnois;‡ and this supposition may help us to account for the fact that, in a group of similar Ogam monuments found in the same place, some bear the sign of the cross, whilst it does not appear on others.

I hold that the Ogam is a *cryptic* character, and intended to be to a great extent secret. If it were generally employed for civil purposes, and not a secret mode of writing, the knowledge of which was confined to clerics and professional antiquaries, we ought to have found abundant examples of its use in recording historical names and facts of public importance.

APPENDIX A.

The following extracts from Aldhelm's letter to Eadfrid contain refeences to his history, and to the frequent visits made in his time by English Scholars to the Irish Schools. I give the text as it appears in Ussher's Sylloge, though I believe it is here and there corrupt:—

"Fateor, sodalitatis fraternæ cliens, altique municipatus municeps, postquam vestram repedantem istuc ambrosiam ex Hiberniæ brumosis circionum insulæ climatibus (ubi ter bino circiter annorum circulo uber sophiæ sugens metabatur) territorii marginem Britannici sospitem applicuisse, rumigerulis

* Adamnan, bk. iii., cap. 23. † Colgan, AA. SS., p. 471.

‡ Life, c. 32, in Cod. Marsh, fol. 147 b.b. The practice may have been suggested by the acts of Jacob recorded Gen. xxviii. 11, 18.

referentibus, comperimus: ilico (ut flammiger flagransque flagitabat amor) ineffabiles altithrono grates, pansis in edito utrimque volis, tripudiantes obtulimus: potissimum, quod te exulem almus arbiter priscam paterni visitantem clientelam ruris (cærula ponti trans glauci, enormesque dodrantium glareas atque spumiferas lymphæ nemphæ obstirpationes, circili carina procellosum sulcante salum) reducere, ovante navarcho, dignatus est: ut, ubi dudum incunabulis tyrocinii editus rudibus adulto tenus pubertatis ævo adoleveras, nunc versa vice (superna opitulanti prærogativa affatim fultus) ab incolatu externi ruris repatrians, præceptoris vocamine indepto sortitoque fretus fungeris.

Illud æque almitati beatitudinis vestræ ex penetrabilibus præcordii nequaquam promens dissimulo propalare (ad augmentum, mystisque ut reor tripudium, imo ad doxam onomatis Cyrii) magnopere inolevisse: quod præconio citra modum rumoris Scotico in solo degentium (quorum contubernio parumper fretus es) ceu tonitruali quodam boatu fragore nimboso emergenti, auditus nostri quatiuntur: et per tot tantaque telluris stadia lectionis opinio, pagis provinciisque divulgata, crebrescit. Siquidem tam creber meatus est (istinc illincque, istuc illucque) navigero æquoreas fretantium calle gurgites, velut quædem contribula apium germanitas nectar fabre conficientium. Nam quemadmodum alternatim, reciproca facessente noctis nebula, mellifluum examen (emergente axe tenus æthere Titanæ) gliscentium culmina tiliarum per florulenta, ad crates graciles, sarcinatum, flava bajulans gestamina asportat; eodem modo, ni fallor, lurconum conglobatio lectorum (ꝺunnıŋ ꞇac ꝓꝛıꝺh) ac residua sagax discipulorum caterva, florigeris hagiographiæ ex arvis, non solum artes grammaticas atque geometricas bis ternasque omissas physicæ artis machinas; quinimo allegoricæ potiora ac tropologicæ disputationis bipertita bis oracula (æthralibus opacorum mellita in ænigmatibus problematum) siticulose sumentes carpunt, et in alveariis sophiæ jugi meditatione loco tenus servanda condentes, abdunt. E quorum catalogo tuam proficisci solertiam, præda onustam atque torrente fluentis sacrosancti propinatam redundantemque excellens fama percrebuit."

APPENDIX B.

I subjoin the note appended by Ussher to Aldhelm's letter.* I do this for two reasons: first, because what he says with respect to the equivalence of the Latin AE to the Saxon EA bears upon my interpretation of the Ogam before us; and also because his judgment on Aldhelm's style is not unduly severe:—

"Scripta est [epistola] in stylo ita impedito et implicato; ut non admodum mirari subeat, etiam Guilielmi Malmesburiensis temporibus repertos fuisse, quibus hujusmodi Aldhelmi scripta 'nauseam pepererint: non attendentibus quod juxta mores gentium varientur modi dictaminum.' Ita ille, de gestis regum Anglorum lib. i., cap. 2. ad dicti confirmationem porro subjiciens; 'Græcos involute, Romanos circumspecte, Gallos splendide, Anglos pompatice dictare solere.' Porro Eahfridus sive Æhfridus (EA enim Anglo-Saxonum, AE Latinorum diphthongo respondet) ad quem, post sex annos studiis in Hibernia impensos, missa est hæc epistola, non alius esse videtur quam Eadfridus (ab aliis Eatferd, a quibusdam etiam Egfridus dictus) cui Beda vitam Cuthberti soluta oratione a se descriptam dicavit; quemque Eadberto anno Dom. 698, in Lindisfarnensi episcopatu successisse, ex Dunelmensis Ecclesiæ historia a Turgoto conscripta, et Florentii Wigornensis annalibus intelligimus. Antequam vero ille episcopatum est adeptus, epistolam hanc scriptam fuisse liquet; licet in regio MS. titulum nunc præfixum habeat. 'Incipit epistola Aldhelmi episcopi.' Verum, cum post annum 698, ad Schireburnensem episcopatum Aldhelmum provectum fuisse constet: nos priorem Malmesburiensis abbatis appellationem retinere maluimus.—Vid. Florent. Wigorn. ann. 666. Et Dempster. Histor. 6."

Bishop Stubbs confirms Ussher's criticism on Aldhelm's style. He says†:—

"Aldhelm occupies a very important position in the history of English literature. He was the first Englishman who cultivated classical learning

* Works, Ed. Elrington, vol. iv., pp. 452–3.

† Dict. Christian Biography, Art. *Aldhelm.*

with any success, and the first of whom any literary remains are preserved. His extant writings by no means justify his claim to the character of a great scholar, but they show that he possessed considerable knowledge of books and great facility in writing very involved and elaborate Latin. His works, by both their style and subject, convey an idea of quaint and fantastic elaboration, which he derived, perhaps, from his Irish teaching."

I fear I cannot say that Bishop Stubbs's conjecture as to the source of Aldhelm's style is without foundation. No one who had read the following passages in the Life of S. Brendan would venture to deny that, so far as alliteration is concerned, the Irish writer equals, if he does not surpass, the Anglo-Saxon: Life of St. Brendan, in Stokes's Edition of "Lives of Saints from the Book of Lismore," pp. 108, 109, 114.

It is right to mention that Bishop Stubbs* suggests that the Eahfrid of Aldhelm's Letter may possibly be identified either with Eadfrid, Bishop of Lindisfarne, or with Echfrith (or Atfrith), whom William of Malmesbury states to have been fifth Abbot of Glastonbury (A.D. 719–729), though his name does not appear on the more ancient list given in MS. Tiberius B. 5; Memorials of S. Dunstan, p. lxxxii.

The spelling of Anglo-Saxon names, and their transliteration into Ogam characters, are so very uncertain that it is *possible* that Echfrith may be commemorated in the present instance. But I think the identification of Apefritti with Eadfrid much more probable. The date and historical significance of the inscription would be the same in either case.

* Dict. Christian Biography, Articles *Eahfrid*, *Echfrith*.

APPENDIX C.

To save trouble to those scholars who, in discussing this inscription, would wish to refer to the Irish Martyrologies in the hope of meeting with names similar to that of Eadfrid, I have annexed references to the Felire, Marian Gorman, the Martyrology of Donegal, and that of Tallaght. There are three entries in the Martyrology of Donegal which ought to be noticed.

At May 5 we have the name *Ectbrict*, to which Dr. Todd has subjoined the following note :—"The more recent hand adds 'Saxo, Mart. Taml. et Marian.' This is, no doubt, S. Eadbert, Bishop of Lindisfarne, who is commemorated on the 6th of May in the Roman Martyrology."

The name is spelt Eucbrit in the Martyrology of Tallaght, Eucbrict in Marianus Gormanus.

At May 27 we find [Echfriotan, *Marian.*] and [Ecbriotan, son of Ossa, Martyrology of Tamlacht]. On these Dr. Todd observes :—"The two paragraphs within brackets are in the more recent hand. They both, evidently, relate to the same individual; Egbert, or Eagbert appears in the Roman Martyrology, 24 April. He died in Hy, A.D. 729, and is frequently mentioned by Bede. But as he was not son of Ossa, it would seem that Ecfrit, or Ecgbrit, son of Ossa, may have been intended. It is difficult, however, to understand how he came to be regarded as a saint. The Mart. of Tamlacht is, probably, in error in making him son of 'Ossa.' See Reeves's *Adamnan*, pp. xlv., 186." Reeves adds a note :—"According to Ven. Bede, King Ecfrid, son of Oswy, fell on the 13th of the Calends of June, or the 20th of May, as Tighernach and the Annals of Ulster also record; so that, independently of his unsaintly character and hostility to the Irish, the discrepancy of the dates seems to exclude him from the present commemoration."

At Dec. 8 [Ecbrit, or Icbrit. *Marian. Videtur Anglus*], Reeves observes :—"This paragraph is in the later hand."

In the Felire we find, at Dec. 8th* :—"The victory of humble Egbert

* Stokes's Ed., p. clxxiv.

(Ichtbrictan) who came over the great sea: unto Christ he sang a vigil in a coracle without a hide (around it)."

On this, among the notes* from Rawl. 505 and Laud 610, we find:—"Of Egbert, i. e. at Dungiven in Cianachta of Glen Geimin. Or in Connaught he is. i. in Mayo of the Saxons in Cera. i. i. e. of Dungiven in Ciannacht of Glenn-Geimin, or in Mayo of the Saxons in the west of Connaught, or in Tulach-leis of the Saxons in Ui-Conail Gabra, *vel* etc. Or of Tulach-leis of the Saxons in Munster, and Bercert was his name of Ichtber etc. i. Ichtbrict who is in Tech-Saxan in Ui-Echach of Munster; and brother was he to Benedict of Tulach-leis of the Saxons, and a brother of theirs Cuitbrict and . . . "

On the name Ichbrictan Stokes remarks†:—"Ichtbrictan, gen. sg. -brictain, Dec. 8. In the Franciscan copy this is ictbritain, and in the Mart. Don. at Dec. 8, there is an entry in a later hand: 'Ecbrit no Ictbrit. Marian. Videtur Anglus.' He was clearly not an Irish saint, for Oengus says 'he came over (the) great sea,' and his name is probably (with the Irish -án added) Akiperht, Eggibraht, Ekpreht (Förstemann, *Deutsches Namenbuch*, 13), of which the A. S. form was Egberht, or Ecbyrht. Bede writes Ecgberct, Reeves, Col. 378. An 'Eicbericht Christi miles' is mentioned *ibid.*, p. 383."

* Stokes's Ed., p. clxxx. † Fel. Glossarial Index, p. cclxxiv.